

Author: Ray not King's assassin

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A Tennessee appeals court must race against time, according to a local author who has long maintained that James Earl Ray didn't kill the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Harold Weisberg, an 83-year-old Shookstown resident, was an investigator in the original Ray case. One of his nine books, "Frame-up," published in the early 1970s, asserted Ray's innocence.

"There is absolutely no case against Ray, except a phony one," he said Friday. "There was no case against him and there isn't today."

Ray, who pleaded guilty to Dr. King's 1968 slaying, is serving a 99-year prison sentence. Almost immediately after giving the plea, he reversed himself and has since sought to have his case tried.

Ray's quest has taken a turn toward trial recently with the decision of Judge Joe Brown, who said Thursday that modern technology can prove definitively whether Ray's rifle was the murder weapon. The appeals court will decide whether to allow the tests.

However, Ray is now 68 years old and his health is falling. He suffers from liver disease that his lawyers describe as terminal. Some, like Mr. Weisberg, are afraid he will die before he has his day in court.

"He's not able to participate in his own defense," said Mr. Weisberg. He obtained approximately 8,000 pages of FBI documents from its headquarters and seven field offices and read it all.

"There is absolutely no proof," he said. "Zilch."